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Montana Homecoming

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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ADDRESS BY SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

at the

MONTANA HOMECOMING

Oct 1970

This homecoming brings me to Montana for the thirteenth time this year. My returns have been all too brief because they have had to be interspersed through one of the most active sessions of the Senate in recent memory. Already this year, there have been more roll call votes than in any other year in the history of the nation.

For weeks on end, the Senate has operated on a double-shift, handling one legislative item during daylight hours and a second in the evening. This procedural innovation has been effective in coping with the great volume of legislation requested by the President. It has also helped to counter what might be termed occasional work-stoppages and slowdowns or, as they are known in the legislative trade, fillibusters and talkathons.

The Senate might properly be criticized, I suppose, for trying to do too much. Nevertheless, I believe the legislation which has been produced, on the whole, is well considered and creditable. I say that without deference to the fact that the Senate is Democratic controlled. Both parties are

responsible for the record. Without substantial cooperation from Senate Republicans, it could not have been achieved.

In view of the intensity of the Senate session, I think you will understand why I am more appreciative than ever of this opportunity to be with you. It is a welcomed interlude. As you know so well, Montana is beautiful to come home to at any time; it seems even more so this fall.

Over the course of my visits this year, I have traveled and re-traveled the State from one end to the other and from north to south--in winter, spring and summer as well as fall. Montana remains, essentially, what it has always been to me, a symphony of mountains, high plains, forests and big sky; a song of wind, lakes, streams and rivers.

Crisscrossing the State, I have thought of the letters that have come to me in great numbers from every county. What has been written to me over the years covers personal concerns associated with the federal government--such as job opportunities, social security claims, military discharges, veterans benefits and draft problems--and also concerns over the future of the nation.

In traveling the State, I have seen these countless individual concerns which, each year, grow more numerous, against the backdrop of the visible growth of the Montana community which has taken place during the last two or three decades; I have seen these concerns in a changing setting of new schools, highways, and airports, irrigation projects, libraries, nursing homes, community centers, hospitals, fish hatcheries, agricultural research stations, the wilderness areas, national parks and such vast undertakings as Hungry Horse, Libby on the Kootenai and Yellowtail. But the most important factor to me down through the years has been your letters when you have written to me for assistance of one kind or another. To you they were important; to me they were just as important. No problem of yours was too small to try to attend to; no problem of yours was too big to handle. No problem of yours was ignored because I cared.

While much had been done there is yet much that remains to be done. Whatever our difficulties here at home, however, we are fortunate in at least one respect. The same difficulties, when they occur in heavily urbanized regions, seem to be multiplied many times over. Whether it is crime, drug abuse, pornography, run-down schools, inadequate transportation, high-cost health services, or social tensions--all of the ills of modern times are intensified in densely populated areas.

The contrast is to be seen most sharply in the menace of air and water pollution. There are occasions when the air over great metropolitan centers borders on becoming unsafe for breathing. Without corrections, we could well confront, in the next decade, a series of urban catastrophies in this nation.

The dangerous implications of air pollution also apply to water and to food which is taken from the seas, rivers and lakes. It applies, too, to the pollution of the land. As you may have heard, a warning has recently gone out against hunting woodcock in certain areas because of the high concentration of D.D.T. which is now present in these birds.

The President has spoken against pollution. The Congress has legislated against pollution. Songs have been written about it. Parades and student strikes have been launched in opposition to it. Substantial sums of money are already being spent to curb it. If we are agreed on any point, it is that we do not want to see this situation spread any further. Nevertheless, the level of damage has not fallen. We have not yet halted the destruction, let alone reversed it.

As you well know, vast space and sparse population do not serve as automatic safeguards. There have been serious abuses of the environment even in Montana. To be sure, we still have more than an average share of clean air, living waters, and a healthy earth with a rich cover and content. Continuous vigilance is essential, however, if we are to protect the natural treasures with which we have been endowed. Conservation is a responsibility we owe to ourselves and to subsequent generations.

I am persuaded that conservation and development can go hand in hand. There is a point of balance between the two which yields wise use rather than abuse. It has yet to be achieved either in this State or, for that matter, anywhere in the nation. It is going to take time, money and effort but that balance can be found. Indeed, it must be found.

Growing national awareness of the danger of pollution comes at a time of economic recession. The latter has tended to detract our attention from the former. Yet, the one cannot be neglected because of the other. We are confronted not only with these two nationwide questions but with a host of other difficulties. They cannot be evaded. We cannot drop out of any of them.

Nevertheless, the state of the economy is fundamental and the fact of recession must be faced. It is seeping across the nation even as the Administration is engaged, through restrictive financial practices, in trying to stop the inflation. The inflation has not yet been halted--it now stands at a record 5.7%--but the drag of the recession is clearly felt in pockmarks of depression scattered throughout the nation. It is to be seen in slowing industrial production, in faltering markets, in the disappearance of credit, in the curtailment of housing construction, in high interest rates, falling profits and shrinking take-home pay. It is underscored in the rise of unemployment which a few days ago reached a rate of $5\frac{1}{2}\%$, the highest in six years. Four more cities of over 50,000 population were added to the list of those with substantial unemployment, raising the total to 35--more than at any time since 1964.

In present circumstances, I think the late President John F. Kennedy would have said: "How are we going to get this country moving again?" It is a question which should be asked. We should ask it of ourselves repeatedly until satisfactory answers are found. Nor does the question apply only to

the economy. There is a whole range of concerns in which the need exists "to get this country moving again."

As I have already noted, a firm grasp must be obtained on the problem of pollution. There is also the serious inner threat to the nation which stems from gun crime and other criminal violence and the increase in drug abuse. All of these destructive elements are linked. Recent estimates indicate, for example, that much of the criminal activity in New York City is traceable to the drug traffic and the desperation of its victims. Is it any wonder that the crime rates are high when there are an estimated 100,000 heroin addicts in that city alone, many under 12 years old--some addicted since birth?

More and more money is being expended for crime control; yet the booming increase in law-breaking and violence is unabated. The only encouraging element in the current statistics is that the steady rise in murders committed with guns has been held in check for the first time in memory.

We have just begun to scratch the surface of the problem of crime. It is highly complex and involves in addition to effective police control, rehabilitation and prevention. We can talk about crime but if we mean to do something about it, we are going to have to act on its many aspects. Crime is more than a local problem. It is more than a state problem. I have no apologies to make for my votes to curb crime whether it be by gun or otherwise. Your guns will never be confiscated; the second amendment still stands but guns must be and will be kept out of the hands of the criminal, the mentally retarded, the drug addict and all other potentially dangerous persons. That is what the 1968 Gun Crime Bill does--no more--and I know the people of Montana feel as I do on this. I don't want to just talk about crime, drug addiction, violence and pornography; I want to do something to curb all these ills which affect our society and I have and I will, regardless of the consequences. I have never let the people of Montana down and I never will.

The present dimensions of crime are nationwide. So, too, must be the solutions. No part of the nation, not even Montana, can expect immunity. No locality or state can build the walls high enough to isolate itself from this

epidemic. As Americans we are all exposed to its dangers. We are all responsible for its solution. That may entail the acceptance of some approaches to crime control which have less validity here than elsewhere in the nation. I do not believe I misjudge Montanans, however, when I say that they are prepared to do their share in meeting this difficulty for the good of America.

Crime is one of many issues which have preoccupied the Senate for many months. Some of these issues can be used and are now being used in the hot pursuit of votes from one end of the country to the other. This is the time of the year when political medicine men ride through the nation, and Montana, offering simple nostrums.

In the end, however, the answers to the nation's difficulties will not be found in panaceas. Nor can they be exorcised by political bombast. Whatever the political complexion of the next Congress--these difficulties will still be with us. They will yield only to sustained concern and patient and deliberate action.

Insofar as legislation is involved, I can say that the Senate--and when I say the Senate, I mean members of both parties--the Senate has been

trying and will continue to try to open up, through orderly legislation, effective ways to check crime, violence, drug abuse, and pornography. In all these areas the record of the Senate has been outstanding--to put it mildly. The Senate has also been in the vanguard in seeking answers to pollution and will continue to seek answers, whether the difficulty lies in thoughtless profiteering, indifference, ineffective federal or local authority, insufficient technology or an unresponsive and wasteful government bureaucracy.

In short, I am confident that the Senate will do what can be done and what must be done in a legislative sense to keep the nation fit for decent habitation. I reiterate, however, that the problems are not going to be liquidated overnight. We are going to be hearing about race problems, housing shortages, educational and health needs, pollution, crime, drugs and violence for many years to come.

I do not despair of the nation's ability to meet this situation. I reject the view that nothing can be done just as I reject the view that the answers to our difficulties are to be found in wild demonstrations, or in personal attacks and recrimination.

Occasional excesses of political zeal in this pre-election period are understandable. To go around this nation, however, planting the explosives of anarchy or sowing the time-bombs of political confusion and division for political profit, in my judgment, is to do a public disservice. The problems which confront us are such as to call not for violent division but for the highest possible degree of unity among our people, young and old, soldier and student, Republican and Democrat; and President and Congress.

I have no apologies to make for the Senate on that score. I have served as Majority Leader for a decade--longer than any Majority Leader in the history of the Republic--but I have never seen the Senate more national and less partisan in outlook than during the present session. Democrats and Republicans have functioned together, for the good of the nation. Members of both parties have worked not against but with the President, supporting him when possible in good conscience and differing with him--Republicans and Democrats alike--with restraint and reason when, in good conscience, they could not.

The Senate is one body in a Congress of two, in a federal government of divided powers, in a nation of many jurisdictions--state, urban and rural. Each must do its part in facing up to the nation's problems. It is going to take a dedicated effort of government and private organizations, schools, colleges and citizens--all of us--to maintain an equitable present and a livable future for the people of this nation.

We need to remove the wedges of division which have been driven deeper and deeper into our society in the past few years. We need to summon ourselves to a new unity. It is not beyond our doing. It can be achieved if we will listen to one another's viewpoint, if we will act towards one another--regardless of our differences--with a degree of decency, understanding and restraint.